SINO-MOZAMBICAN RELATIONSHIP AND THE ROLE OF MEGAPROJECTS IN MOZAMBIQUE'S TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

China's expanded and deeper involvement in the African continent has led to significant changes in the international order and enabled a new attractive alternative to foster economic growth in African countries. China was considered one of the largest trading partners, investors, and sponsors of African countries in the early 21st century (i.e., in the 2000s), particularly for countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as Mozambique. The country was the largest investor in Mozambique in 2016; since the end of the civil war – which undermined the national infrastructure of the African country –, infrastructure mega-projects (such as the construction of bridges, roads, dams, airports, commercial establishments, and tourism) were built by Chinese companies and/or with funding and donations from the Chinese government. Furthermore, since colonial times, Mozambique and China have had a close commercial relationship, which included the supply and training of the Mozambican army, the provision of humanitarian aid, the granting of scholarships to Mozambican students, and the sending of doctors and teachers, as well as the development of technological centers in Mozambique.

This article, based on Master's thesis research, aims to identify new opportunities, potential, and the threats and weaknesses that Mozambique must overcome to achieve fair economic and social development, reversing

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its history marked by civil conflicts, social inequality, and poverty. In addition, it analyzes China's strategic role in the territorial development and infrastructure strengthening processes observed in Mozambique; it can also be used to help studies focused on promoting policies based on megaprojects aimed at regional development.

The present research sought to answer the following guiding question: can one consider that Chinese investments in infrastructure megaprojects could drive economic growth and support production and social development in Mozambique? Two hypotheses were raised to help answer this question: a) megaprojects work as means to increase national and international competition among large cities in order to attract investments; and b) the adoption of development policies backed up by megaprojects is shaping the future of large cities at different scales. Furthermore, it can have a dynamic effect on the economy through the expansion of both job positions and income generation in the local economy. However, these hypotheses are not always applicable to the specific case of Mozambique. Thus, it is essential for Mozambique to make massive investments in training and qualifying its citizens, among other measures, so they can benefit from the job positions created, which are generally capital-intensive and require skilled labor.

The aims of the current study were a) to analyze the post-Civil War social and economic dynamics of Mozambique; b) to address the national and international literature focused on investigating megaprojects as development strategy; c) to investigate features (opportunities and challenges) of the role played by China in Mozambique, mainly in the construction and reconstruction of local infrastructures.

The methodological structure of the current article comprises three topics, in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. It adopted the literature review procedure, whose first section addressed the historical, political, and economic context of Mozambique, from its colonial period to present days. This contextualization process enables readers to better understand the paths "taken" and the main challenges faced by the country in the pursuit of development and economic growth. The main theories in the megaproject literature will be discussed in the second section, based on academic articles and journals. The third section aims at investigating the role played by China in Mozambique, as well as the historical context, the current Chinese territorial expansion strategy applied in Africa, and its main effects and results.

Historical context of Mozambique

Mozambique is located in Southwestern Africa. The country has a coastline along the Indian Ocean that spans 2,515 km² and a total land area of approximately 801,590 km².It shares borders with Tanzania (to the North), Malawi (to the Northwest), Zambia and Zimbabwe (to the West), as well as with South Africa and Swaziland (to the Southwest). The country is one of the sixteen members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and is also part of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, CPLP, in Portuguese).

Libânio and Castigo (2021) divided Mozambique's economic and social formation process into four different periods. The first one refers to the colonial period, which started at the time of the great voyage by Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama, who, on his way to the Indies, discovered the island of Mozambique in early March 1498. After Portugal established its political and administrative control over Mozambique, it started exploiting Mozambican natural resources in order to meet its economic interests. Among the actions taken by the Portuguese government was leasing land to foreign companies that had acquired rights to use Mozambique's natural resources and were authorized to control the African citizens living there. In addition, Mozambican lands were converted into plantations and farms focused on growing commercial crops, such as sugar, sisal and cotton, which turned them into sources of profit for the Portuguese government (Mondlane 1975). The colonial government has gradually increased the "imports" of settlers from the metropolis to the province, through incentives to Portuguese civil servants and officials. This was done to expand its territorial domain by populating and strengthening the "new Portuguese territory". Consequently, the trading and exploitation of Mozambican slave labor became the most profitable commercial activity in the country, as well as the initial development pattern of the colony (Cabaço 2007; Mondlane 1975).

After slave labor was abolished in 1807, Mozambican labor gradually started to be used within the continent in the form of forced labor. This shift led to the creation of transport and supply systems connecting Mozambique to other countries, as well as strengthening internal connections, such as the Port of Lourenço Marques and the first railway line connecting South Africa to Mozambique, which were established to meet production-flow needs (Visentini 2012; Cau 2011). Mozambican citizens' migration towards South African gold mines and former English colonies' plantations also worked as a relevant source of foreign exchange for Portugal (Isaacman and Isaacman

1983). This regime has deepened the subordinate condition of prejudice against and exploitation of the Mozambican population; moreover, it turned the country into a large "migrant workforce-reserve pocket" (Saraiva 2007, 216) for South Africa.

The pillar of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique, among other African colonies, was featured by a "dualist essence" defined by an European society and culture that stood in opposition to black society and culture (Cabaço 2007). Job positions available in the most modern sectors during the colonial period were taken by Portuguese individuals, whereas Africans were left with secondary job positions without any prestige. The marginalization and submission imposed on African individuals, the countless humiliations, the constant feeling of inferiority, the practice of mandatory labor, and the denial of rights to education, health, land, and basic services comprise a set of injustices committed by Portuguese authorities in colonial Mozambique. These injustices contributed to the unification of various social groups aimed at fighting against Portuguese oppression (Cau 2011).

The second period concerns the years of struggle for African independence and the era of centrally planned economy. At that time, after witnessing the exploitation of Mozambique's labor and natural resources without reinvestments at local level or on behalf of the Mozambican population, the country formed the guerrilla group called Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique,* FRELIMO, in Portuguese) and started a war against the Portuguese State in the Cabo Delgado Province, on September 25, 1964. FRELIMO was built through the merge of three nationalist organizations instituted by immigrant Mozambicans in neighboring countries, namely: the Mozambique African National Union (MANU), which was founded in Kenya, in 1961; the National Democratic Union of Mozambique (*União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique,* UDENAMO, in Portuguese), which was founded in Southern Rhodesia (currently, Zimbabwe), in 1960; and the African National Union of Independent Mozambique (*União Nacional Africana de Moçambique Independente,* UNAMI, in Portuguese), which was founded in Nyasaland (currently, Malawi), in 1961 (Brito 2019). Although the group was determined to achieve independence by peaceful means, it was convinced that a war would be necessary to achieve its goals. FRELIMO believed that the Mozambican population only had two options: continuing to live indefinitely under repressive imperial rule or finding a way to effectively use force to hurt Portugal without ruining itself (Mondlane 1975).

The armed struggle lasted approximately ten years. The first official attack on Chai's administrative post, in Cabo Delgado province, started in

September 1964 and only ended in September 1974, after a ceasefire granted by Portugal. During this period, FRELIMO's leadership remained in the hands of two leaders, namely: Eduardo Mondlane (from 1962 to 1969) and Samora Machel, who led the group for approximately sixteen years (from 1970 to 1986), after Mondlane was murdered.

The signing of the Lusaka Agreement, in 1974, ended the struggle for Mozambique's independence; thus, the power of the new Mozambican State was unconditionally transferred to the guerrilla group. According to Visentini (2012), the adverse internal scenario in Portugal — i.e., the Carnation Revolution held in 1974, which overthrew Salazar's authoritarian regime and triggered a time of political instability in the country, as well as economic losses due to increased military expenses, and military contingent reduction — has favored the end of the war and enabled the African country to conquer its independence. Interestingly, Portugal also had to deal with two other liberation fronts — one from Angola and the other one from Guinea-Bissau —; at the same time, it had to maintain its repression forces in São Tomé, Cape Verde, Macao, and Timor, in order to avoid losing its overall control over the colonies (Mondlane 1975).

During the transition from colony to independent country, a transient government was established with the main goal of creating a favorable political and economic environment for Mozambique's independence. Samora Machel took Office as the president of Mozambique on September 25, 1975. At that time, FRELIMO was influenced by the Marxist-Leninist political ideology and Mozambicans gradually became free to cultivate their lands, to get involved in political debates, and to make their own decisions. However, the void left by Portuguese colonizers, the destruction of local infrastructure, and the exclusion/marginalization of social groups (such as religious or traditional leaders who started to have their powers revoked; and the rural population, which was threatened by FRELIMO's ideals, according to whom, communal villages and rural zones were backward places and, consequently, should be combated) gradually led to the dissatisfaction and discontentment of part of the population.

As the dissatisfaction of some Mozambican citizens increased, the country slowly collapsed and a new political movement, which resulted from internal (Mozambican military from the Portuguese Army Special Forces and Portuguese settlers who left Mozambique and lived in Rhodesia) and external (intensification of diplomatic relations between Mozambique and its neighboring countries, i.e., Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, where Samora Machel had declared his support to the constitution of black majority governments in Africa and to anticolonial movements in neighboring countries) factors, led to the creation and strengthening of the Mozambican National Resistance (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana,* RENAMO, in Portuguese). From that time onwards, the country plunged into a bloody and prolonged civil war against two political parties aimed at conquering and taking power over Mozambique (Visentini 2012).

This group often took violent actions to attack and destroy different infrastructures in the country; these actions, in association with the effects of the natural disasters taking place in that period and with Mozambique's weak government policies, contributed to further impoverish the population, worsen the hunger issue and increase the number of refugees and migrations to neighboring countries. As Mozambique plunged into a civil war, FRELIMO's weak political and ideological system became increasingly evident (Visentini 2012) and the country faced real economic chaos, deterioration of cities, buildings, streets and businesses, and its production — mainly the agricultural one — was also affected (Saraiva 2007).

It was only on October 4, 1992, when the General Peace Agreement was signed, that the Civil War period was ended and the Democratization process in the country began, based on the implementation of the Constitution of the Multiparty Republic. Increased vulnerability, penury, and a feeling of poverty were the consequences of the long period of conflicts in Mozambique. Some of the factors contributing to the end the civil war in Mozambique encompassed a) acknowledging Southern Rhodesia as a Sovereign State, in 1980, when its name changed to Zimbabwe; b) RENAMO's weakening after the death of its leader, André Matsangaissa, in Sofala province; and c) Mozambique's economic weakness due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the lack of financial and military support.

The third period addressed by Libânio and Castigo (2021) refers to the transition from socialist-type economy to liberal economy, which took place under the structural adjustment plans carried out in the country from 1987 to 1997. At that time, Mozambique implemented a program to restructure its economy, namely: Economic Restructuring Program (*Programa de Reestruturação Econômica,* PRE, in Portuguese). PRE was promoted by the IMF and the World Bank; it focused on presenting the main changes to be carried out in the Mozambican economy to achieve economic growth.

Some propositions in this plan were based on establishing a more market-friendly constitution (through the advancement of privatizations) and on food market liberalizations (food production remained as basis for Mozambican economic development, whereas industries were the economy's driving factor). The reforms introduced in the country focused on reducing the centralization of and direct interventions in the economy. In order to do so, the following measures were adopted: a) currency devaluation; b) spending cuts to stop economic deficits caused by the country's reconstruction process; c) increased investments (Visentini 2012). Although PRE did not achieve its intended results in the most remote areas (mainly in those affected by civil conflicts), it managed to restore the economic growth, mainly in the main cities (Visentini 2012). However, it was also used as a program to transfer resources and initiatives from the public to the private sector; in other words, PRE enabled Mozambique to change from planned economy to market economy, a fact that worsened its negative effects on the national social fabric and increased the prevalence of poverty in Mozambique (Barbosa 2021). Poor urban families and dwellers, whose wages were unable to meet their basic needs, were the ones mainly affected by PRE (Visentini 2012).

Finally, the fourth and last period covers the 2000s. The Mozambican economy performed well throughout the first years of the new century; it recorded high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates, which was mainly driven by the expansion of megaprojects based on external financing, as well as by large aid flows that were higher than, or close to, 8%. However, the economic expansion cycle declined from 2015 to 2020 due to a series of shocks caused by political and internal security instability, the fall in the price of raw materials, adverse weather conditions, as well as the "suspension of external support by cooperation partners to the State Budget and the Balance of Payments, and the suspension of the International Monetary Fund program in Mozambique after the discovery of undisclosed public debt" (Garcia 2020, 117).

The flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) jumped from U$ 139 million in 2000 to U$ 2.2 billion in 2019, with emphasis on 2013, when its value exceeded U$ 6.1 billion or 36% of Mozambique's nominal GDP (UNCTAD 2021). The biggest investors in the country comprise the Netherlands (it accounts for approximately 37.7% of investments), South Africa (22%), and Italy (13.5%). China accounted for approximately 0.6% of the total amount invested in Mozambique in 2020. In terms of sectoral distribution, extractive industries receive 84.1% of total FDI. 74% of it was absorbed by companies belonging to the category of megaprojects linked to the oil and gas sector (Banco de Moçambique 2020).

With respect to the country's export agenda, Banco de Moçambique (2020) has emphasized the sale of mineral coal, dried or in-grain vegetables, cashew nuts, heavy sands, aluminum cables, petroleum-derived oils, soy, electric power trading, natural gas, raw aluminum exports, seeds and oleaginous fruits, natural sands, coal, sawn wood, crustaceans, cotton, sugar, tea and dried fruits. On the other hand, according to Banco de Moçambique (2020), 30% of products imported by the country refer to intermediate goods (inputs), which are followed by consumer goods (27%), capital goods (18%), among others (24%). Thus, it is possible to conclude that the composition of Mozambique's export agenda is based on the export of commodities (agricultural and energy), whereas the country depends on importing high added-value products. This feature is typical of backward countries and economies, which not only hinders the development, but also worsens the underdevelopment in these nations.

Although colonial Mozambique experienced a long period of backwardness, the Mozambican economy in the early 21st century was featured by a substantial economic growth that determined the country's position as one of the largest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such a position resulted from the country's high and consistent growth rates, in association with improvements in its institutional framework and governance. Accordingly, Libânio and Castigo (2021) have emphasized that the current discovery of energy resources, such as coal and natural gas, both accounts for and is a "hope" for the country's continuous strengthening and development processes. However, the aforementioned authors have also warned that, as the increased Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in Mozambique are mostly allocated to the exploitation of energy resources, they are linked to the construction of megaprojects that require the implementation of capital-intensive technology in a country with surplus labor and low technical qualification. Thus, "the number of job positions generated by these megaprojects is insignificant. These aspects reveal the continuous marginalization of most of the population, so that agriculture remains the activity supporting them" (Libânio and Castigo 2021, 45).

Therefore, the fight against poverty and extreme poverty is, if not the biggest, one of the biggest challenges faced by Mozambique nowadays, since it is not just a current issue, but a historical and structural one. Furthermore, another factor jeopardizing the country's growth and development refers to its current political instability associated with attacks carried out by extremist groups in the Northern and Central regions of the country. Besides destroying the country's infrastructure and agricultural production fields, and forcing migrations to other regions, such instability contributes to increase the population's vulnerability, as well as fosters and worsens social inequality (Libânio and Castigo 2021).

In light of the foregoing, it is necessary to adopt development plans to cover the largest (and poorest) part of the population; these plans must be oriented and aligned to each other in order to ensure the country's security and political-economic stability, to diversify its productive matrix, to increase its income and employment levels, and to expand the population's access to basic infrastructure, health, and education. This is because, as the country advances in the development and construction of large industrial and infrastructure complexes, it is necessary to train the population to be absorbed into the various types of created job positions. Otherwise, Mozambique would experience more of the same, namely: increased inequality, poverty and extreme poverty rates, increased number of internal conflicts, and Mozambique's permanence as a source of natural resources and profitability for developed countries.

Literature review: concepts and brief discussion about the literature on megaprojects

The approach to megaprojects is not a recent phenomenon emerging from the new economic dynamics of the globalized world. It refers to a "new phenomenon capable of reproducing features of the past" (Silva 2015, 36, our translation[3]), since the "new" matches the conflict scale and its dimension in contemporary times (Silva 2015).

A significant number of studies and research on megaprojects is available in the English literature. Flyvbjerg is one of the great authors focused on investigating this topic. The aforementioned scholar is an international expert in the management and planning of urban megaprojects, with emphasis on the management and planning of projects focused on infrastructure/public works, financing and risk management, and cost-benefit analysis. According to him, the definition of megaprojects is associated with large-scale complex projects that cost US$ 1 billion or more and that demand long-term planning involving both the public and private spheres. In addition, they ambitiously change the structure of society, affect (either positively or negatively) millions of people, require high technology levels, and are justified by the ideology of generating several benefits for society, such as the creation and maintenance of job positions and improvements in productivity. Besides, these project types increase competitiveness, since they enable reducing production costs (Flyvbjerg 2014).

3 In the original: "*novo fenômeno que reproduz características do passado*" (Silva 2015, 36).

On the other hand, Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez (2002) have emphasized that megaprojects are part of the development logic, according to which their implementation and the marketing emerging from them help project cities at an international level; therefore, they work as necessary means to continuously generate economic growth and to attract new investments. However, the aforementioned authors have also warned that, as the construction of megaprojects expands across large urban centers, they tend to meet the demands of elites, making them less democratic. This can lead to real estate speculation and increased polarization and socioeconomic inequality in regions receiving these investments.

Gellert and Lynch (2003) focused on defining megaprojects as both creative and destructive phenomena. Throughout their approach, they emphasized that these projects transform both landscapes and the environment around them, and that they can also lead to the displacement of either individuals or entire communities. Similar to Flyvbjerg (2014), the aforementioned authors have also emphasized the use of high-tech equipment and the need of coordinated capital and State power applications to make these constructions viable. The difference observed in the approach by Gellert and Lynch (2003) lies on megaprojects' classification into 4 different types, namely:

1. Infrastructure Projects: construction of harbors, railways, water and sewage systems, among others;
2. Extraction Projects: extraction of mineral resources, oil, natural gas, and coal;
3. Production Projects: industrial tree plantations, export processing zones, manufacturing parks, and large industrial complexes and hubs;
4. Consumer projects: construction of large tourist facilities, theme parks, shopping malls, among others.

The current study adopted the concept of megaprojects by Crosby (2017) for the specific case of Mozambique. According to the author, megaprojects are defined as projects budgeted in millions (or billions) of dollars that require long-term and complex planning, that are capable of attracting public and/or political attention and that are highly endowed with new technologies and cutting-edge engineering. Given their complexity, they are susceptible to pressure from different parties to minimize adverse impacts during construction and post-construction stages, as well as to mitigate effects on the quality of life of the local population and on the environment (Capka 2004).

Othman (2013) has evidenced 4 challenge types to be overcome in the process to implement megaprojects in both developed and underdeveloped countries. The first type involves the engineering challenge, which is attributed to the use of outdated materials that can be replaced by newer technologies available in the market during the project construction, the lack of research and business innovation capacity, inadequate levels of scientific and technological knowledge, lack of professional experience, and disregard for consulting experts during decision-making processes. Human development challenges are associated with lack of skilled workers at the site where the project is implemented in, as well as with lack (or low quality) of professional training and education programs. Managerial and political challenges are associated with factors such as unfavorable regulatory framework, bureaucracy, corrupt practices, weak governance and political tension. Finally, the last challenge refers to sustainability, which encompasses the naive or inadequate risk analysis of projects' consequences (mainly of the environmental risks and preservation of historic spaces), lack of national policy for the resettlement of people affected by the construction of these projects, and lack of social complexity management in terms of project acceptance by the community it is intended to serve.

On the other hand, Flyvbjerg (2005b) has emphasized that challenges to planning large infrastructure projects (which may extend to others) are associated with a high level of misinformation about the costs and benefits that decision-makers face when deciding whether or not to build them. In summary, the aforementioned author has pointed out that the problems to be faced have the following features: i) they are highly risky projects due to their long planning time and complexity; ii) the technology used in them is often non-standard; iii) decision-making and planning often involve several actors with conflicting interests; iv) the project's scope or ambition level can significantly change overtime. In addition, events that were not mapped and, therefore, that were not accounted for during the project planning process can result in inadequate budgets and lead to misinformation about costs, benefits and risks, which, in their turn, can lead to budget overruns and/or benefit reduction.

Studies carried out by the aforementioned author (Flyvbjerg, 2005a) also contradict the idea that local growth and development can be boosted by the construction of large projects capable of generating job positions and other local economic benefits insofar as, according to this expert, the jobs created are temporary and filled by workers who will have their contracts terminated as the construction works are complete. In addition, Flyvbjerg has also highlighted that these job positions demand highly skilled workers, as well as that vacancies in underdeveloped countries with history of low-skilled workers are not filled by locals. Thus, workers qualified to take these job positions can even be “imported” from developed countries (Flyvbjerg 2005a).

Infrastructure megaprojects and China’s role in Mozambique’s territorial development process

The Chinese presence in Mozambique is not a recent phenomenon, as indicated by Feijó (2012) and Garcia (2020), who reported that this is a long-standing relationship and that the first records of rapprochement between the two countries date back to late 19th century, when Mozambique was still a Portuguese colony. According to the authors, there are records on the establishment of Chinese migrant workers in Lourenço Marques and Beira cities at that period. They provided qualified labor, which was cheaper than European labor, to build infrastructures, public buildings, railways, and sea ports, among other ventures.

However, the Sino-Mozambican relationship got stronger around 1960, during the struggle for Mozambique’s independence, since China provided diplomatic and military support (guerrilla training and formation) to the country’s liberation movement (Roque and Alden 2012; Feijó 2012). The Asian country was the first to acknowledge Mozambique’s conquered independence, to formalize their diplomatic ties through support agreements, as well as through technical and financial cooperation to build infrastructures, and to provide assistance to Mozambique to deal with the effects of famine, in 1983 (Garcia 2020; Roque 2009; Ilhéu 2010).

In the 2000s, Sino-Mozambican relations gained new impetus through the launch of FOCAC (Forum on China Africa Cooperation). China’s presence in Mozambique was reinforced through a set of diplomatic relations based on political and economic motivations, which led to increased number of diplomatic visits and exchanges among legislative bodies, political parties and government agencies; to foreign policy coordination on regional and international issues; to economic and trade cooperation development in sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture and natural resources’ extraction (Feijó 2012; Roque and Alden 2012); to increased number of loans and foreign direct investments; to Mozambican debts’ cancellation; to technical cooperation and infrastructure projects; and to grants for public works[4] (Ilhéu 2010).

4 For example: the construction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Joaquim Chissano Conference Center and National Parliament buildings in Maputo, by Chinese company Sogecoa.

Chinese FDI in Mozambique increased from US$10 million in 2003 to US$60 million in 2007, when China became the 6th largest investor in Mozambique (Roque and Alden 2012). China was the largest investor in Mozambique in 2011 and 2016, as shown in the table below. The justification for this event lied on the combination between favorable political and macroeconomic environments in recent decades, the abundance of natural resources (mineral, forestry and fishing resources), the country's strategic geographic position (due to its access to the sea and the African continent's hinterlands) and, finally, on political elites that have promoted an economy type aimed at increasing foreign direct investments in the country (Barbosa 2021; Ekman 2012).

Table 1 - Main FDI's countries of origin in Mozambique (2010 - First half of 2016)

Ranking	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	Portugal	China	United Arab Emirates	South Africa	United Arab Emirates	France	China
2	South Africa	South Africa	Portugal	China	Mauritius	China	South Africa
3	Italy	Portugal	South Africa	Portugal	South Africa	United Arab Emirates	Mauritius
4	Belgium	Mauritius	Mauritius	Switzerland	Portugal	Portugal	United Kingdom
5	China	United States	China	Germany	China	South Africa	Portugal
6	Spain	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Arab Emirates	United Kingdom	India	Turkey
7	United Kingdom	United Arab Emirates	Brazil	Uganda	Macao	Mauritius	Italy
8	Singapore	Norway	India	Mauritius	Turkey	Singapore	India
9	Kenya	Australia	Italy	Italy	Kenya	Australia	Spain
10	Sweden	India	Lesotho	United Kingdom	France	Turkey	United States

Source: Massangaie 2017, 171.

Although Mozambique has attracted FDI for large mining and energy projects[5], Chinese foreign direct investment focuses on building Special Economic Zones (SEZs) — industrial zones, and science and technology parks — that follow the Chinese model, in order to attract and capture foreign investment (Roque and Alden 2012; Roque 2009). Moreover, China also sponsors projects aimed at rebuilding Mozambique's national infrastructure, which was destroyed by struggles for independence and worsened by the civil war that undermined the country's development and that made it deficient and more vulnerable. Thus, the construction of Chinese infrastructure projects has been followed by the discourse that they are crucial to help leveraging Mozambique's development and economic growth. Chinese construction companies gained room in the country and intensified their participation in the reconstruction of roads and public buildings, as well as in the construction of stadiums, airports, conference centers, hydroelectric plants, and low-cost housing projects in Mozambique. However, one cannot forget that behind the advancement of diplomatic relations between the two countries, China's cooperation in Mozambique mainly focuses on projects that are not financed by "traditional" donors due to pre-conditions established by these donors, such as the IMF and the World Bank. This is exactly the reason why China is appreciated by the Mozambican political elite (Chichava 2012).

The table below lists some of the infrastructure megaprojects built in partnership with the Chinese government and/or companies in Mozambique.

Table 2 - Chinese construction works in Mozambique (2003-2018)

Construction work	Year	Price (US$)	Region	Funding agencies	Sector
Joaquim Chissano Conference Center	2003	5 million	Maputo	Chinese government	Infrastructure
Building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2004	12 million	Maputo	Chinese government	Infrastructure
Mphanda Nkuwa Dam	2006	2.3 billion	Zambezi River	Export-Import Bank of China	Infrastructure

5 Such as: MOZAL — aluminum foundry; Kenmare — heavy sands; SASOL — natural gas; the coal mines in Moatize; and the Corridor Sands Titanium Project.

Moamba Major Dam	2006	300 million	Maputo	Export-Import Bank of China	Infrastructure
Maputo International Airport	2007	75 million	Maputo	Export-Import Bank of China	Transport and Storage
Attorney General's Office	2007	40 million	Maputo	China National Complete Plant Import & Export Corporation	Infrastructure
Zimpeto National Stadium	2011	70 million	Zimpeto	Chinese government	Infrastructure
Maputo-Katembe Bridge	2012	1.1 billion	Maputo	Export-Import Bank of China	Transport and Storage
Maputo Ring Road	2012	300 million	Maputo	Export-Import Bank of China	Transport and Storage
Gloria Hotel	2014	300 million	Maputo	Partnership between Mozambican government and Chinese company AFECC	Infrastructure
Xai-Xai Airport	2017	70 million	Gaza	Non-specified Chinese government institution, government agency	Transport and Storage
Maputo-Katambe Bridge	2018	700 million	Maputo	Export-Import Bank of China	Transport and Storage

Source: elaborated by the author, based on Garcia (2020), Roque and Alden (2012), Jansson and Kiala (2009), Roque (2009), Schiere and Rugamba (2011), Wan (2018), Moçambique (2015), "Com apoio da China..." (2018), Banco MAIS, Moçambique (2017), Secretariado Permanente do Fórum para a cooperação econômica e comercial entre a China e os países de Língua Portuguesa (Macau) (2021).

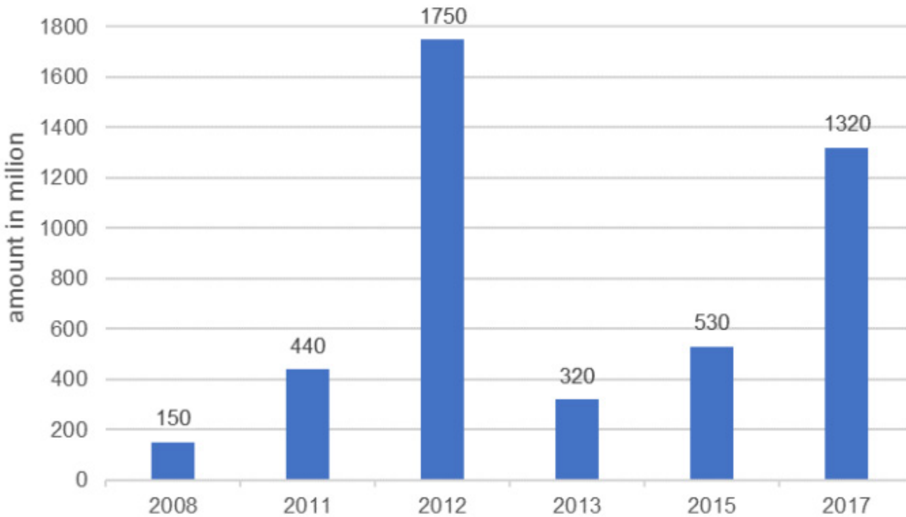
The construction of roads and bridges through Chinese support is so significant that Schiere and Rugamba (2011), in their article titled "Chinese Infrastructure Investments and African Integration", have estimated that Chinese contractors account for having built approximately one third of the total road extension (which would approach 600 km of roads) built in Mozambique. They have also emphasized that companies operating in the construction sector were also involved in the rehabilitation of urban water supply systems in the cities of Beira and Quelimane, in the reconstruction of Maputo's water system, and in the construction of housing projects in Zimpeto City; all of these projects played a key role in the process of establishing basic infrastructure in the country.

According to Barbosa (2021), since 2006, China has conquered relevant positions within the construction sector in Mozambique. According to data from the China Global Investment Tracker, between 2008 and 2017, China invested approximately US$6 billion in infrastructure projects (transport and construction); China Communications Construction and China State Construction Engineering are the main multinational companies operating in this sector. The aforementioned author also highlighted that China adopted a strategy focused on its comparative economic advantages to overcome the strong competition with Western and South African companies operating in Mozambique, "[...] i.e., through low-cost offers based on the use of cheap labor and low managerial costs" (Barbosa 2021, 89, our translation[6]). In order to guarantee its space in the African market, the Chinese government also uses symbolic and economic diplomacy "based on broad diplomatic attention and on support to prestigious and development assistance projects implemented through low interest rates and direct donations" (Barbosa 2021, 89, our translation[7]).

6 In the original: "*isto é, na oferta de baixo custo, por meio da utilização de mão de obra barata e custos gerenciais baixos*" (Barbosa 2021, 89).

7 In the original: "*concretiza através de uma ampla atenção diplomática, apoio a projetos de prestígio e assistência ao desenvolvimento por meio de juros baixos e doações diretas*" (Barbosa 2021, 89).

Graph 1 – Chinese investment in the infrastructure sector in Mozambique in US$ million (2008-2017)

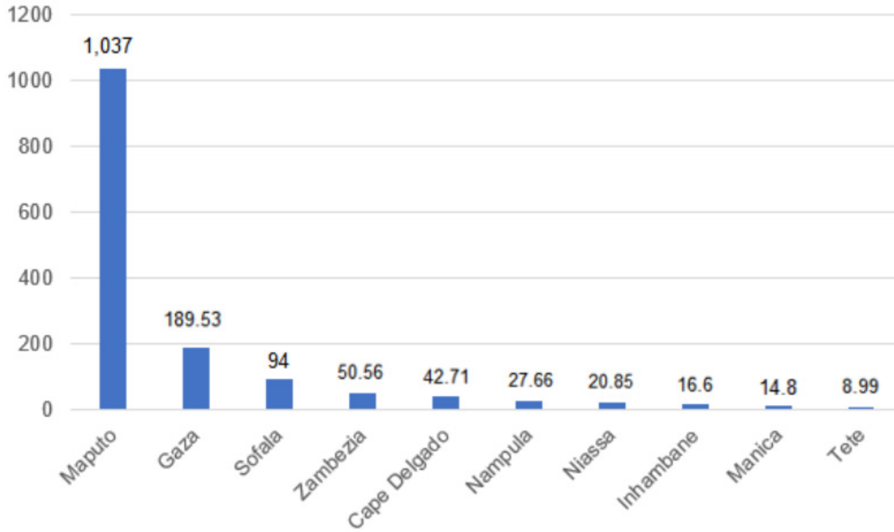


Source: China Global Investment Tracker (2022).

One must acknowledge that the rehabilitation of Mozambique's infrastructure plays a key role in strengthening the tourism sector — which is a potential sector, since China has listed the country as a tourist destination, in addition to supporting and recommending it as a vacation destination for Chinese citizens —, in food flow, transport and logistics processes, in promoting regional integration in the country, in reducing logistics costs, as well as in rehabilitating urban water supply systems in the cities of Maputo, Beira and Quelimane (Garcia 2020).

The next graph shows the geographical arrangement of Chinese investments in Mozambique. It is possible to see the allocation of most FDIs to the capital Maputo, as well as the concentration of investments in the Southern region of the country, since Maputo and Gaza provinces (Southern region) appear as the largest FDI recipients, with approximately 82% of investments being concentrated in this region. Together with provinces such as Sofala and Zambézia (Central region) and Cabo Delgado (Northern region), they form the five largest FDI recipients in Mozambique. Consequently, one of the effects resulting from the concentration of Chinese investments in the Southern provinces of the country lies in worsened regional inequalities between Southern and Northern Mozambique.

Graph 2 - Chinese FDI distribution per province, in Mozambique in US$ million (2006-2017)



Source: Barbosa (2021).

According to Garcia (2020), Chinese ambassador in Maputo, JSuJian, has confirmed China's intention to keep investing in Mozambique; he also believes that Chinese foreign direct investment in Mozambique is likely to increase in the coming years. His belief is based on several other projects listed in a memorandum signed by the Mozambican government in 2017, which covers several priority needs, such as the construction of industrial parks, roads and ports, agriculture, and the exploitation of natural and energy resources.

Chinese investments in the reconstruction of Mozambique's infrastructure appear to be an excellent opportunity for both countries. On the one hand, Mozambique can benefit from the provision of several Chinese construction projects at more competitive costs to enable the country's modernization and integration (through bridge, road and highway constructions), as well as reducing its dependence on the aid from Western countries. On the other hand, China can increase its profitability and soft power in Mozambique, as well as reinforce a new form of South-South Cooperation under the discourse of mutually shared gains and benefits for both governments and actors involved in it.

However, it is necessary to take into consideration the full details of the Sino-Mozambican diplomatic relationship. Robinson (2012) has emphasized that, according to Large (2008), China is mostly motivated by resource extraction and that it is not concerned with Africa's long-term economic prosperity. In addition, Chinese aid projects aimed at serving Chinas' own interests, since it sees Mozambique as an opportunity to expand the market for Chinese products and as an excellent way to build large projects to provide employment for Chinese workers. It is so, because these projects require hiring Chinese contractors and companies in order to be built. The adopted strategy is based on the fact that Chinese labor is cheaper, and it enables Chinese contractors to operate "at a minimum profit rate of 3%, as opposed to the European 15%" (Visentini 2014, 46, our translation[8]).

The Chinese territorial expansion in Mozambique can be interpreted as the key moment of Chinese economic growth, as the Asian country seeks raw materials and energy sources beyond its borders to continue expanding its internal accumulation (Ribeiro 2010). This also symbolizes the decline in diplomatic relations and in the relevance of Western countries and institutions in Mozambique, reflecting changes in the global power balance (Visentini 2014). However, Ribeiro (2010) also believes that the Chinese expansion on the African continent, which reflects the new face of economic imperialism featured by increased Chinese presence in Mozambique, has led to anti-China and anti-Chinese sentiments that, according to Feijó (2012), "refer to movements, oftentimes with populist nature, that compare the Chinese presence in Africa to neocolonial processes and that blame it for the exploitation and degradation of local economies" (Feijó 2012, 145, our translation[9]).

If one assumes that the expansion of investments in Mozambique is profitable and important for the Chinese government, challenges and obstacles must be faced to enable the Chinese cooperation process to progress. Durán and Chichava (2012) have emphasized difficulties in the relationship between Mozambicans and Chinese, which emerged from, and were exacerbated by, the language barrier. The aforementioned authors have also highlighted difficulties in establishing good working relationships, cooperation, and technical exchanges, as well as distrust and weak connections

8 In the original: "*a uma taxa de lucro mínima de 3%, ao contrário dos 15% europeus*" (Visentini 2014, 46).

9 In the original: "*Trata-se de movimentos, por vezes de pendor populista, que comparam a presença chinesa em África a processos neocoloniais, responsabilizando-a pela exploração e degradação das economias locais*" (Feijó 2012, 145).

between Chinese and African workers, mostly due to cultural and linguistic differences.

There are also reports that local workers are hired by Chinese companies, which do not act in compliance with Mozambican labor standards and disregard both the laws and the regulations in place in the country. Among the issues observed in this scenario, one finds wage difference; unequal treatment between foreign and national workers; lack of safety systems and equipment in the work environment (which can lead to several work-related accidents); precarious working conditions for Mozambicans; resilience and lack of payment of vacation and overtime allowances leading to discontentment, protests and strikes; and lack of formal employment contracts for Mozambican workers (Chichava 2012; Nielsen 2012; Garcia, Kato and Fontes 2012).

Accordingly, Chichava (2014) has stated that Chinese projects do not benefit the local population and that they only meet the needs of Chinese elites and investors (the author mentioned the Wanbao[10] investment called "land grabbing" by China, as an example of it). He also highlighted that:

> Mozambican workers, however, see Chinese managers as rude and authoritarian individuals who think that their ideas are better and who believe they work harder than Mozambicans. However, the Chinese see Mozambicans as: (1) thieves who steal materials and equipment; (2) lazy and slow workers who do not like to work overtime even when they are promised to be paid; and (3) irresponsible because, once they get paid in the end of the month, they disappear and only come back after they have spent their wages, and they care little about supporting their families (Chichava 2014, 4).

Robinson (2012) has also emphasized that, besides social issues, the Chinese expansion can pose risks to both the environment and sustainable development, since Chinese projects can accidentally and/or intentionally cause destruction by ignoring environmental impacts or through activities, such as predatory deforestation, which can get worse due to the ambiguity or lack of clarity in the interpretation and enforcement of Mozambican laws. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that the encouragement and promotion of development in specific regions (such as the capital Maputo, which concentrates a large part of Chinese FDI) worsens regional inequality in an extremely unequal country.

10 Project financed through the partnership between the Wanbao Company and Mozambique, which aims at increasing agricultural yield, namely: irrigated rice production in Lower Limpopo irrigation region, Gaza province.

Conclusion

The infrastructure deficit caused by the civil war made the Chinese expansion into Mozambican territory both timely and convenient for Mozambique. The construction of new infrastructure projects enabled access to financial, transport, hotel and basic infrastructure services in the country. However, Mozambique has to deal with potential threats and overcome internal obstacles so that the Chinese presence in the country can lead to socio-economic development and benefit the Mozambican population.

The first obstacle to be overcome lies in the fact that Mozambique has precarious facilities for Chinese companies to operate in the country. In addition, Mozambique lacks qualified professionals capable of dealing with Chinese technology due to precarious access to quality education by part of the African population, especially by the poorest. With respect to the low use of Mozambican labor in Chinese projects developed in the country, the language barrier hinders knowledge and techniques' exchange between Mozambican and Chinese workers, whereas cultural clashes hamper their relationship[II]. On the other hand, it is necessary to overcome criticisms about the low quality of Chinese construction works (which may result from lack of specific knowledge about the location and/or from low-quality inputs used in the construction process), lack of compliance with labor (such as overtime pay, labor formalization based on contracts, better working conditions, work equipment supply) and environmental laws, adequacy and respect for the local culture, as well as requirement and compliance with the minimum (although sufficient) amount of local manpower in order to contribute to the development of the investigated region.

Thus, there is a lack of planning and national political projects to favor the economic growth and development of Mozambique, since the country is seen as a large consumer market for Chinese products; consequently, Sino-Mozambican relationships are gaining room and tend to increase in the coming years. Moreover, the country has diverse, and broad access to natural resources (mainly when it comes to the exploitation of energy resources and to the access to productive lands in Mozambique) capable of serving Chinese interests. Identifying and understanding how to take advantage of opportunities, as well as addressing weaknesses and threats, is essential for Mozambique to undergo a major structural transformation and to reduce

II Chinese people have a culture of extreme dedication to work; they work more than eight hours a day, from Monday to Saturday. Mozambican workers, on the other hand, do not share the same culture; therefore, they can be labeled as lazy or unwilling to work.

poverty, extreme poverty, and the social and economic inequalities it has faced over time.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the analysis of the China-Mozambique cooperation and the megaproject's role in the territorial development plan of Mozambique during the 2000s. Its objective is to answer the question: is it possible to assume that Chinese investments in megaproject's constructions can increase economic growth and result in productive and social development in Mozambique? In this regard, the paper proposes to identify the main economic and social effects related to the implementation of Chinese infrastructure megaprojects in the country to understand if it's possible to appoint the strategy adopted by Mozambique as a real kind of transformation and socioeconomic development.

KEYWORDS

Mozambique. Megaprojects. Sino-Mozambican Relation.

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